The Episode of the Old Bailey

The Schemes of Colonel Clay

BY GRANT ALLEN.

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When we reached Bow street we were relieved to find that our prisoner, after all, had not evaded us. It was a false alarm. He was there with the policeman, and he kindly allowed us to make the first formal charge against him.

Of course, on Charles' sworn declaration and my own, the man was at once remanded, bail being refused, owing both to the serious nature of the charge and the slippery character of the prisoner's antecedents. We went back to Mayfair—Charles well satisfied that the man he dreaded was under lock and key; myself not too well pleased to think that the man I dreaded was no longer at large, and that the trifling little episode of the 10 per cent commission stood so near discovery.

Next day the police came round in force and had a long consultation with Charles and myself. They strongly urged that two other persons at least should be included in the charge—Cesarine and the little woman whom we had variously known as Mme. Picardet, "White Heather," Mrs. David Granton, and Mrs. Elihu Quackenboss. If these accomplices were arrested, they said, we could include conspiracy as one count in the indictment, which gave us an extra chance of conviction. Now they had got Colonel Clay, in fact, they naturally desired to keep him, and also to indict with him as many as possible of his pals and confederates.

Here, however, a difficulty arose. Charles called me aside with a grave face into the library.

"Seymour," he said, "fixing me, "this is a serious business. I will not lightly swear away any woman's character. Colonel Clay himself—or, rather, Paul Finglemore—is an abandoned rogue, whom I do not desire to screen in any degree. But poor little Mme. Picardet—she may be his lawful wife, and she may have acted implicitly under his orders. Besides, I don't know whether I could swear to his identity. Here's the photograph the police bring of the woman they believe to be Colonel Clay's chief female accomplice. Now, I ask you, does it in the least degree resemble that clever and amusing and charming little creature who has so often deceived us?"

In spite of Charles' gibes, I flatter myself I do really understand the whole duty of a secretary. It was clear from his voice he did not wish me to recognize her, which, as it happened, I did not.

"Certainly, it doesn't resemble her, Charles," I answered, with conviction in my voice. "I should never have known her." But I did not add that I should no more have known Colonel Clay himself in his character of Paul Finglemore, or of Cesarine's young man, as that remark lay clearly outside my secretarial functions.

Nevertheless it flitted across my mind at the time that the Seer had made some casual remarks at Nice about a letter in Charles' pocket, presumably from Mme. Picardet, and I reflected further that Mme. Picardet in turn might possibly hold certain answers of charles', couched in such terms as he might reasonably desire to conceal from Amelia. Indeed, I must allow that under whatever disguise "White Heather" appeared to us, Charles was always that disguise's devoted slave from the first moment he met it. It occurred to me, therefore, that the clever little woman—call her what you will—might be the holder of more than one indiscreet communication.

"Under these circumstances," Charles went on, in his austerest voice, "I cannot consent to be a party to the arrest of 'White Heather.' I—I decline to identify her. In point of fact"—he grew more emphatic as he went on—"I don't think there is an atom of evidence of any sort against her. Not," he continued, after a pause, "that I wish, in any degree, to screen the guilty. Cesarine, now—Cesarine we have liked and trusted. She has betrayed our trust. She has sold us to this fellow. I have no doubt at all that she gave him the diamonds from Amelia's riviere; that she took us by arrangement to meet him at Schloss Lebenstein; that she opened and send to him my letter to Lord Craig-Ellachie. Therefore I say, we ought to arrest Cesarine. But not 'White Heather'—not Jessie; not that pretty Mrs. Quackenboss. Let the guilty suffer; why strike at the innocent—or, at the worst, misguided?"

"Charles," I exclaimed, with warmth "your sentiments do you honor. You are a man of feeling. And 'White Heather,' I allow, is pretty enough and clever enough to be forgiven anything. You may rely upon my discretion. I will swear through thick and thin that I do not recognize this woman as Mme. Picardet."

Charles clasped my hand in silence. "Seymour," he said, after a pause, with marked emotion, "I felt sure I could rely upon your—er—honor and integrity. I have been rough upon you sometimes. But I ask your forgiveness. I see you understand the whole duties of your position."

We went out again, better friends than we had been for months. I hoped, indeed, this pleasant little incident might help to neutralize the possible ill effects of the 10 per cent disclosure, should Finglemore take it into his head to betray me to my employer. As we emerged into the drawing room, Amelia beckoned me aside toward her boudoir for a moment.

"Seymour," she said to me, in a distinctly frightened tone, "I have treated you harshly at times, I know, and I am very sorry for it. But I want you to help me in a most painful difficulty. The police are quite right as to the charge of conspiracy; that designing little minx, 'White Heather,' or Mrs. David Granton, or whatever else we're to call her, ought certainly to be prosecuted—and sent to prison, too—and have her absurd head of hair cut short and combed straight for her. But—and you will help me here, I'm sure, dear Seymour—I cannot allow them to arrest my Cesarine. I don't pretend to say Cesarine isn't guilty; the girl has behaved most ungratefully to me. She has robbed me right and left, deceived me without compunction. Still—I put it to you as a married man—can any woman afford to go into the witness box, to be cross-examined and teased by her own maid, or by a brute of a barrister on her maid's information? I assure you, Seymour, the thing's not to be dreamt of. There are details of a lady's life—known only to her maid—which cannot be made public. Explain as much of this as you think well to Charles, and make him understand that if he insists upon arresting Cesarine I shall go into the box—and swear my head off to prevent any one of the gang from being convicted. I have told Cesarine as much; I have promised to help her. I have explained that I am her friend and that if she'll stand by me I'll stand by her, and by this hateful young man of hers."

I saw in a moment how things went. Neither Charles nor Amelia could face cross-examination on the subject of one of Colonel Clay's accomplices. No doubt in Amelia's case it was merely a question of rouge and hair dye; but what woman would not sooner confess to a forgery or a murder than to those toilet secrets?

I returned to Charles, therefore, and spent half an hour in composing, as well as I might, these little domestic difficulties. In the end it was arranged that if Charles did his best to protect Cesarine from arrest Amelia would consent to do her best in return on behalf of Mme. Picardet.

We had next the police to tackle—a more difficult business. Still, even they were reasonable. They had caught Colonel Clay, they believed, but their chance of convicting him depended entirely upon Charles' identification, with mine to back it. The more they urged the necessity of arresting the female confederates, however, the more stoutly did Charles declare that for his part he could by no means make sure of Colonel Clay himself while he utterly declined to give evidence of any sort against either of the women. It was a difficult case, he said, and he felt far from confident even about the man. If his decision faltered, and he failed to identify, the case was closed; no jury could convict with nothing to convict upon.

At last the police gave way. No other course was open to them. They had made an important capture, but they saw that everything depended upon securing their witnesses, and the witnesses, if interfered with, were likely to swear to absolutely nothing.

Indeed, as it turned out, before the preliminary investigation at Bow street was completed (with the usual remands), Charles had been thrown into such a state of agitation that he wished he had never caught the Colonel at all.

"I wonder, Sey," he said to me, "why I didn't offer the rascal two thousand a year to go right off to Australia, and be rid of him forever! It would have been cheaper for my reputation than keeping him about in courts of law in England. The worst of it is, when once the best of men gets into a witness box there's no saying with what shreds and tatters of a character he may at last come out of it!"

"In your case, Charles," I answered dutifully, "there can be no such doubt; except, perhaps, as regards the Craig-Ellachie Consolidated."

Then came the endless bother of "getting up the case" with the police and the lawyers. Charles would have retired from it altogether by that time, but, most unfortunately, he was bound over to prosecute.

"You wouldn't take a lump sum to let me off?" he said, jokingly, to the inspector. But I knew in my heart it was one of the "true words spoken in jest" that the proverb tells of.

Of course, we could see now the whole building up of the great intrigue. It had been out as carefully as the Tichborne swindle. Young Finglemore, as the brother of Charles' broker, knew from the outset all about his affairs, and, after a gentle course of preliminary roguery, he laid his plans deep for a campaign against my brother-in-law. Everything had been deliberately designed beforehand. A place had been found for Cesarine as Amelia's maid—needless to say, by means of forged testimonials. Through her aid the swindler had succeeded in learning still more of the family ways and habits and had acquired a knowledge of certain facts which he proceeded forthwith to use against us.

His first attack, as the seer, had been cleverly designed so as to give us the idea that we were a mere casual prey; and it did not escape Charles' notice now that the detail of getting Mme. Picardet to inquire at the Credit Marseillais about his bank had been solemnly gone through on purpose to blind us to the obvious truth that Colonel Clay was already in full possession of all such facts about is. It was by Cesarine's aid, again, that he became possessed of Amelia's diamonds, that he received the letter addressed to Lord Craig-Ellachie, and that he managed to dupe us over the Schloss Lebenstein business. Nevertheless, all these things Charles determined to conceal in court; he did not give the police a single fact that would turn against either Cesarine or Mme Picardet.

As for Cesarine, of course, she left the house immediately after the arrest of the Colonel, and we heard of her no more till the day of the trial.

When that great day came I never saw a more striking sight than the Old Bailey presented. It was crammed to overflowing. Charles arrived early, accompanied by his solicitor. He was so white and troubled that he looked much more like a prisoner than prosecutor. Outside the court a pretty little woman stood, pale and anxious. A respectful crowd stared at her silently.

"Who is that?" Charles asked. Though we could both of us guessed, rather than see, it was the "White Heather."

"That's the prisoner's wife," the inspector on duty replied. "She's waiting to see him enter. I'm sorry for her, poor thing. She's a perfect lady."

"So she seems," Charles answered, scarcely daring to face her.

At that moment she turned. Her eyes fell upon his. Charles paused for a second and looked faltering. There was in those eyes just the faintest gleam of pleading recognition, but not a trace of the old saucy, defiant vivacity. Charles framed his lips to words, but without uttering a sound. Unless I greatly mistake, the words he framed on his lips were these: "I will do my best for him."

We pushed our way in, assisted by the police. Inside the court we saw a lady seated, in a quiet black dress, with a becoming bonnet. A moment passed before I knew—it was Cesarine.

"Who is—that person?" Charles asked once more of the nearest inspector, desiring to see in what way he would describe her.

And once more the answer came, "That's the prisoner's wife, sir."

Charles stared back, surprised. "But—I was told—a lady outside was Mrs. Paul Finglemore," he broke in, much puzzled.

"Very likely," the inspector replied, unmoved. "We have plenty that way. When a gentleman has as many aliases as Colonel Clay, you can hardly expect him to be over particular about having only one wife between them, can you?"

"Ah, I see," Charles muttered in a shocked voice. "Bigamy!"

The inspector looked stony. "Well, not exactly that," he replied, "occasional marriage."

Mr. Justice Rhadamanth tried the case. "I'm sorry it's him, Sey," my brother-in-law whispered in my ear. (He said him, not he, because, whatever else Charles is, he is not a pedant; the English language is quite good enough for his purpose.) "I only wish it had been Sir Edward Easy. Easy's a man of the world and a man of society; he would feel for a person in my position. He wouldn't allow these beasts of lawyers to badger and pester me. He would back his order. But Rhadamanth is one of your modern sort of judges, who make a merit of being what they call 'conscientious' and won't hush up anything. I admit I'm afraid of him. I shall be glad when it's over."

"Oh, you'll pull through all right," I said in my capacity as secretary. But I didn't think it.

The judge took his seat. The prisoner was brought in. Every eye seemed bent upon him. He was neatly and plainly dressed, and, rogue though he was, I must honestly confess he looked at least a gentleman. His manner was defiant, not abject like Charles'. He knew he was at bay, and he turned like a man to face his accusers.

We had two or three counts on the charge, and after some formal business Sir Charles Vandrift was put into the box to bear witness against Finglemore.

Prisoner was unrepresented. Counsel had been offered him, but he refused their aid. The judge even advised him to accept their help, but Colonel Clay, as we all called him mentally still, declined to avail himself of the judge's suggestion.

"I am a barrister myself, my lord," he said—"called some nine years ago. I can conduct my own defense. I venture to think, better thany any of these my learned brethren."

Charles went through his examination-in-chief quite swimmingly. He answered with promptitude. He identified the prisoner without the slightest hesitation as the man who had swindled him under the various disguises of the Rev. Richard Peploe Brabazon, the Hon. David Granton, Count von Lebenstein, Professor Schleiermacher, Dr. Quackenboss, and others. He had not the slightest doubt of the man's identity. He could swear to him anywhere.

I thought, for my part, he was ta trifle too cocksure. A certain amount of hesitation would have been better policy. As to the various swindles, he detailed them in full, his evidence to be supplemented by that of bank officials and other subordinntes. In short, he left Finglemore not a single leg to stand upon.

When it came to the cross-examination, however, matters began to assume quite a different complexion. The prisoner set out by questioning Sir Charles' identifications. Was he sure of his man? He handed Charles a photograph.

"Is that the person who represented himself as the Rev. Richard Peploe Brabazon?" he asked, persuasively.

Charles admitted it without a moment's delay.

Just at that moment a little parson, whom I had not noticed till then, rose up, unobtrusively, near the middle of the court, where he was seated beside Cesarine.

"Look at that gentleman!" the prisoner said, waving one hand, and pouncing upon the prosecutor.

Charles turned and looked at the person indicated. His face grew still whiter. It was—to all outer appearance—the Rev. Richard Brabazon in propria persona.

Of course I saw the trick. This was the real parson upon whose outer man Colonel Clay had modeled his little curate. But the jury was shaken. And so was Charles for a moment.

"Let the jurors see the photograph," the judge said, authoritatively.

It was passed round the jury box, and the judge also examined it. We could see at once, by their faces and attitudes, they all recognized it as the portrait of the clergyman before them—not of the prisoner in the dock, who stood there smiling blandly at Charles' discomfiture.

The clergyman sat down. At the same moment the prisoner produced a second photograph.

"Now, can you tell me who that is?" he asked Charles, in the regular browbeating Old Bailey voice.

With somewhat more hesitation, Charles answered, after a pause:

"That is yourself as you appeared in London when you came in the disguise of the Graf von Lebenstein."

This was a crucial point, for the Lebenstein fraud was the one count on which our lawyers relied to prove their case most fully, within the jurisdiction.

Even while Charles spoke, a gentleman whom I had noticed before, sitting beside "White Heather," with a handkerchief to his face, rose as abruptly as the parson. Colonel Clay indicated him with a graceful movement of the hand.

"And this gentleman?" he asked calmly.

Charles was fairly staggered. It was the obvious original of the false von Lebenstein.

The photograph went round the box once more. The jury smiled incredulously. Charles had given himself away. His overweening confidence and certainty had ruined him.

Then Colonel Clay, leaning forward, and looking quite engaging, began a new line of cross-examination.

"We have seen, Sir Charles," he said, "that we cannot implicitly trust your identification. Now let us see how far we can trust your other evidence. First, then, about those diamonds. You tried to buy them, did you not, from a person who represented himself as the Rev. Richard Brabazon, because you believed he thought they were paste; and if you could, you would have given him £10 or so for them. Do you think that was honest?"

"I object to this line of cross-examination," our leading counsel interposed. "It does not bear on the prosecutor's evidence. It is purely recriminatory."

Colonel Clay was all bland deference.

"I wish, my lord," he said, turning round, "to show that the prosecutor is a person unworthy of credence in any way. I desire to proceed upon the well known legal maxim of falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus. I believe I am permitted to shake the witness' credit?"

"The prisoner is entirely within his rights," Rhadamanth answered, looking severely at Charles. "And I was wrong in suggesting that he needed the advice or assistance of counsel."

Charles wriggled visibly. Colonel Clay perked up. Bit by bit, with dexterous questions, Charles was made to acknowledge that he wanted to buy diamonds at the price of paste, knowing them to be real; and, a millionaire himself, would gladly have diddled a poor curate out of a couple of thousand.

"I was entitled to take advantage of my special knowledge," Charles murmured, feebly.

"Oh, certainly," the prisoner answered. "But while professing friendship and affection for a clergyman and his wife, in straitened circumstances, you were prepared, it seems, to take £3,000 worth of goods off their hands for £10, if you could have got them at that price. Is not that so?"

Charles was compelled to admit it.

The prisoner went on to the David Granton incident.

"When you offered to amalgamate with Lord Craig-Ellachie," he asked, "had you or had you not heard that a gold-bearing reef ran straight from your concession into Lord Craig-Ellachie's, and that his portion of the reef was by far the larger and more important?"

Charles wriggled again and our counsel interposed, but Rhadamanth was adamant. Charles had to allow it.

And so, too, with the incident of the slump in Golcondas. Unwillingly, shamefacedly, by torturing steps, Charles was compelled to confess that he had sold out Golcondas—he, the chairman of the company, after repeated declarations to shareholders and others that he would do no such thing—because he thought Prof. Schleiermacher had made diamonds worthless. He had endeavored to save himself by ruining his company. Charles tried to brazen it out with remarks to the effect that business was business.

"And fraud is fraud," Rhadamanth added, in his pungent way.

"A man must protect himself," Charles burst out.

"At the expense of those who have put their trust in his honor and integrity?" the judge interposed coldly.

After four mortal hours of it, all to the same effect, my respected brother-in-law left the witness box at last, wiping his brow and biting his lip, with the very air of a culprit. His character had received a most serious blow. While he stood in the witness box all the world had felt it was he who was the accused and Colonel Clay who was the prosecutor. He was convicted on his own evidence of having tried to induce the supposed David Granton to sell his father's interests into an enemy's hands, and of every other shady trick into which his well-known business acuteness had unfortunately hurried him during the course of his adventures.

I had but one consolation in my brother-in-law's misfortunes—and that was the thought that a due sense of his own shortcomings might possibly make him more lenient in the end to the trivial misdemeanors of a poor beggar of a secretary!

I was the next in the box. I do not desire to enlarge upon my own achievements. I will draw a decent veil, indeed over the painful scene that ensued when I finished my evidence. I can only say I was more cautious than Charles in my recognition of the photographs; but I found myself particularly worried and harried over other parts of my cross-examination. Especially was I shaken about that misguided step I took in the matter of the check for the Lebenstein commission—a check which Colonel Clay handed to me with the utmost politeness, requesting to know whether or not it bore my signature. I caught Charles' eye at the end of the episode, and I venture to say the expression it wore was one of relief that I, too, had tripped over a trifling question of 10 per cent on the purchase money of the castle.

Altogether, I must admit, if it had not been for the police evidence, we would have failed to make a case against our man at all. But the police, I confess, had got up their part of the prosecution admirably. Now that they knew Colonel Clay to be really Paul Finglemore, they showed with great cleverness how Paul Finglemore's disappearances and reappearances in London exactly tallied with Colonel Clay's appearances and disappearances elsewhere, under the guise of the little curate, the Seer, David Granton, and the rest of them.

Furthermore, they showed experimentally how the prisoner at the bar might have got himself up in the various characters; and, by means of a wax bust, modeled by Dr. Baddersley from observations at Bow street, and aided by additions in the gutta-percha composition after Dolly Lingfield's photographs, they succeeded in proving that the face as it stood could be readily transformed into the faces of Medhurst and David Granton. Altogether, their cleverness and trained acumen made up on the whole for Charles' over-certainty, and they succeeded in putting before the jury a strong case of their own against Paul Finglemore.

The trial occupied three days. After the first of the three, my respected brother-in-law preferred, as he said, not to prejudice the case against the prisoner by appearing in court again. He did not even allude to the little matter of the 10 per cent commission further than to say at dinner that evening, that all men were bound to protect their own interests—as secretaries or as principals. This I took for forgiveness; and I continued diligently to attend the trial, and watch the case in my employer's interest.

The defense was ingenious, even if samewhat halting. It consisted simply of an attempt to prove throughout that Charles and I had made our prisoner the victim of a mistaken identity. Finglemore put into the box the ingenuous original of the little curate—the Rev. Septimus Porkington, as it turned out, a friend of his family; and he showed that it was the Rev. Septimus himself who had sat to a photographer in Baker street for the portrait which Charles, too hastily, identified as that of Colonel Clay in his personification of Mr. Richard Brabazon.

He further elicited the fact that the portrait of the Count von Lebenstein was really taken of Dr. Julius Keppel, a Tyrolese music master, residing at Balham, whom he put into the box, and who was well known, as it chanced, to the foreman of the jury. Gradually he made it clear to us that no portraits of Colonel Clay existed at all, except Dolly Lingfield's—so it dawned upon me by degrees that even Dr. Beddersley could only have been misled if we had succeeded in finding for him the alleged photographs of Colonel Clay as the count and the curate, which had been shown us by Medhurst. Altogether, the prisoner based his defense upon the fact that no more than two witnesses directly identified him; while one of those two had positively sworn that he recognized as the prisoner's two portraits which had turned out, by independent evidence, to be taken from other people.

The judge summed up in a caustic way, which was pleasant to neither party. He asked the jury to dismiss from their minds entirely the impression created by what he frankly described as "Sir Charles Vandrift's obvious dishonesty." They must not allow the fact that he was a millionaire—and a particularly shady one—to prejudice their feelings in favor of the prisoner. Even the richest—and vilest—of men must be protected. Besides, this was a public question.

If a rogue cheated a rogue, he must still be punished. If a murderer stabbed or shot a murderer, he must still be hanged for it. Society must see that the worst of thieves were not preyed upon by others. Therefore, the proved facts that Sir Charles Vandrift, with all his millions, had meanly tried to cheat the prisoner, or some other poor person, out of valuable diamonds—had basely tried to juggle Lord Craig-Ellachie's mines into his own hands—had vilely tried to bribe a son to betray his father—had directly tried, by underhand means, to save his own money, at the risk of destroying the wealth of others who had trusted to his probity—these proved facts must not blind them to the truth that the prisoner at the bar (if he were really Colonel Clay), was an abandoned swindler. To that point alone they must confine their attention; and if they were convinced that the prisoner was shown to be the selfsame man who appeared on various occasions as David Granton, as Von Lebenstein, as Medhurst, as Schleiermacher, they must find him guilty.

As to that point, also, the judge commented on the obvious strength of the police case, and the fact that the prisoner had not attempted in any one out of so many instances to prove an alibi. Surely, if he were not Colonel Clay, the jury should ask themselves, must it not have been simple and easy for him to do so? Finally, the judge summed up all the elements of doubt in the identification—and all the elements of probability; and left it to the jury to draw their own conclusions.

They retired at the end to consider their verdict. While they were absent every eye in court was fixed on the prisoner. But Paul Finglemore himself looked steadily toward the further end of the hall, where two pale-faced women sat together, with handkerchiefs in their hands, and eyes red with weeping.

Only then, as he stood there, awaiting the verdict, with a fixed white face, prepared for everything, did I begin to realize with what courage and pluck that one lone man had sustained so long an unequal contest against wealth, authority, and all the governments of Europe, aided by his own skill and two feeble women. Only then did I feel he had played his reckless game through all those years with this ever before him! I found it hard to picture.

The jury filed slowly back. There was dead silence in court as the clerk put the question, "Do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty?"

"We find him guilty."

"On all the counts?"

"On all the counts of the indictment."

The women at the back burst into tears, unanimously.

Mr. Justice Rhadamanth addressed the prisoner. "Have you anything to urge," he asked in a very stern tone, "in mitigation of whatever sentence the court may see fit to pass upon you?"

"Nothing," the prisoner answered, just faltering slightly. "I have brought it upon myself—but—I have protected the lives of those nearest and dearest to me. I have fought hard for my own hand. I admit my crime, and will face my punishment. I only regret that, since we were both of us rogues—myself and the prosecutor—the lesser rogue should have stood here in the dock, and the greater in the witness box. Our country takes care to decorate each according to his deserts—to him, the Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George; to me, the Broad Arrow!"

The judge gazed at him severely.

"Paul Finglemore," he said, passing sentence in his sardonic way, "you have chosen to dedicate to the service of fraud abilities and attainments which, if turned from the outset into legitimate channels, would no doubt have sufficed to secure you without excessive effort a subsistence one degree above starvation—possible even, with good luck, a sordid and squalid competence. You have preferred to embark them on a lawless life of vice and crime—and I will not deny that you seem to have had a good run for your money. Society, however, whose mouthpiece I am, cannot allow you any longer to mock it with impunity. You have broken its laws openly, and you have been found out." He assumed the tone of bland condescension which always heralds his severest moments. "I sentence you to fourteen years' imprisonment, with hard labor."

The pirsoner bowed, without losing his apparent composure. But his eyes strayed away again to the far end of the hall, where the two weeping women, with a sudden sharp cry, fell at once in a faint on one another's shoulders, and were with difficulty removed from court by the ushers.

As we left the room, I heard but one comment all around, thus voiced by a schoolboy: "I'd a jolly sight rather it had been old Vandrift. This Clay chap's too clever by half to waste on a prison!"

But he went there, none the less—in that "cool sequestered vale of life" to recover equilibrium; though I myself half regretted it. I will add but one more little parting episode.

When all was over, Charles rushed off to Cannes, to get away from the impertinent stare of London. Amelia and Isabel and I went with him. We were driving one afternoon on the hills beyond the town, among the myrtle and lentisk scrub, when we noticed in front of us a nice victoria, containing two ladies in deep mourning. We followed it, unintentionally, as far as Le Grand Pin—that big pine tree that looks across the bay toward Antibes. There, the ladies descended and sat down on a knoll, gazing out disconsolately toward the sea and the islands. It was evident they were suffering very deep grief. Their faces were pale and their eyes bloodshot. "Poor things!" Amelia said. Then her tone altered suddenly.

"Why, good gracious," she cried, "if it isn't Cesarine!"

So it was—with "White Heather!"

Charles got down and drew near them.

"I beg your pardon," he said, raising his hat and addressing Mme. Picardet; "I believe I have had the pleasure of meeting you. And since I have doubtless paid in the end for your victoria, may I venture to inquire for whom you are mourning?"

"White Heather" drew back, sobbing; but Cesarine turned to him, fiery red, with the mien of a lady.

"For him!" she answered. "For Paul! for our king whom you have imprisoned! As long as he remains there, we have both of us decided to wear mourning for ever."

Charles raised his hat again, and drew back without one word. He waved his hand to Amelia and walked home with me to Cannes. He seemed deeply dejected.

"A penny for your thoughts!" I exclaimed, at last, in a jocular tone, trying to rouse him.

He turned to me and sighed.

"I was wondering," he answered, "if I had gone to prison, would Amelia and Isabel have done as much for me?"

For myself I did not wonder. I knew pretty well. For Charles, you will admit, though the bigger rogue of the two, is scarcely the kind of rogue to inspire a woman with profound affection.

THE END.

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